

I AM AN ANARCHIST
I WILL NOT RULE

AND RULED I WILL NOT BE.





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This issue of After The Fall has a focus on anarchafeminism and articles/art by anarchist women. Anarchafeminism should be an important aspect of all anarchist work, as patriarchy is the means by which over half the world's population is exploited and oppressed. To be an anarchist, without supporting women in the fight against patriarchy, is not enough. Feminism needs to be an assumed part of anarchism, and to do that, we must not only support women but also recognize our collective role in the oppression of women. On that same note, to be a feminist, without recognizing how all forms of hierarchy (including patriarchy) must be rejected in order to defeat each individual's oppression, is not enough.

After The Fall is an anarchist paper and we recognize how all struggles against authority and hierarchy are interconnected. This process is complex and sometimes very hard. We've made this issue in an attempt to understand our own roles in an oppressive society

and as a step towards destroying that oppression. This is not the topic of the month for us, we are all anarchafeminists and you should be too. For real. One other aspect of this issue is DO IT YOURSELF. DIY is not only useful but important in creating the world we want to live in, one project at a time.

Who we are.

After the Fall is an anarchist collective based out of New York City. This is the third issue of our newspaper. All copies are available free of charge, we accept no advertisements and all articles are anti-copyright. Distribute by any means necessary! Single copies and bundles for distro are available at Mayday Books and Infoshop (155 1st Ave between 9th and 10th streets in the Lower East Side). If you send us a land address, we will mail you a bundle of papers. You can get in touch with us via the NYC Anarchist Hotline 1-212-252-6821 (box 1) or write us at atf@ziplip.com We now have a website as well, check out www.anarcho-nyc.net/ATF.html

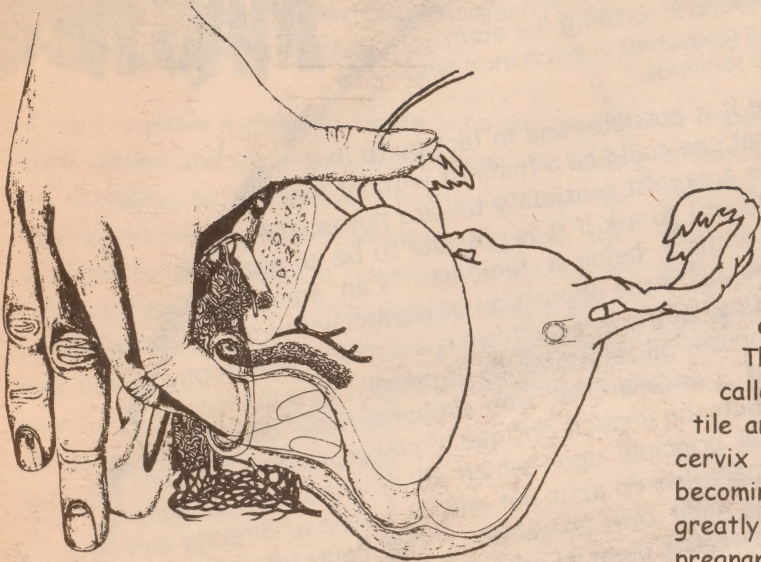
xo

After the Fall Collective

ps Don't forget the People's Strike against the IMF/World Bank in DC this September 27th. Learn more at www.abolishthebank.org

Take Back Your Body

A D.I.Y. Gynecology Primer



Our bodies are our most basic resources. To use them best, treat them well, and keep them out of the reach of patriarchy, it helps to know what's going on inside. The gynecology industry has hijacked much of the autonomy and self-awareness that witchy women of centuries past have enjoyed. Let's get started on taking it back.

First, know what's going on. Ignorance is the means to enslavement, so get to know your body! Familiarize yourself with the workings of your menstrual cycle for the entirety of the cycle. The purpose of regular self-exams is to learn what is normal and healthy for us so we can recognize early changes or infections.

Examining the mucus of your vagina is a very effective way to know what's happening with your cycle. Estrogen is the hormone that regulates the condition and consistency of vaginal mucus. At the beginning and the end of the menstrual cycle when estrogen levels are low, there will be very little mucus. What little there is tends to be sticky, whitish in color, and bitter or salty in taste. As your cycle continues, estrogen levels increase, resulting in an increase in vaginal mucus. The fluids will become slippery. Ovulation, the release of an egg from the ovary, will soon occur. While you are ovulating and fertile, the mucus will be more translucent and stretchy with a sweeter taste. Cover the tips of your fingers with the mucus and pull them apart slowly. Long fibers will stretch between them. This type of mucus will be around for four or five days, starting a day or two before ovulation. You are most fertile during this time. Since sperm can remain alive in your body for up to a week, you are most likely to conceive between one week before ovulation and several days afterward. After the peak of fertility, the hormone progesterone will cause most of the mucus to dry up into a thick sticky substance, sometimes yellowish in color. Menstruation occurs 12 to 14 days after ovulation.

The variance in the duration of different women's cycles is mostly due to the differences in the first half of the cycle, (before menstruation). To be fully aware of the specifics of your cycle it will take about three months of observation.

Careful gynecological self-exams with a speculum will make you far more knowledgeable about your reproductive system than a doctor who sees you once a year. A speculum opens the vaginal canal, and allows you to observe your cervix with the help of a flashlight and mirror. The cervix shifts its posi-

tion in the vagina through the cycle. When you are fertile, the cervix is low in the vagina canal. During menstruation, it rests high in the canal. If you don't have a speculum, you can use your fingers to feel where your cervix is. To find your cervix, put two fingers inside your vagina and reach as far back as you can. Your cervix will feel firm and maybe a little rubbery, like the end of your nose.

The cervical opening leading to the uterus, called the os, will open up when you are fertile and when menstruating. The color of the cervix can change during your cycle, usually becoming red when fertile, though this varies greatly from one woman to the next. If you are pregnant, your cervix will be blue or purple. Detailed directions for using a speculum to observe your cervix can be found at: <http://www.sisterzeus.com/usingspeculum.htm>

Menstruating

I love getting my period. Liberated from the constraints of commercially manufactured toxic products, the process can become interesting and engaging. The feminine hygiene industry works to distance women from their own bodies and keep them dependent on biologically and ecologically suppressive products. There are several healthy alternatives to poison laden pads and tampons, including cloth pads, The Keeper, and sea sponges. There is a great deal of information on this topic available both on-line and in zines.

The Blood Sisters Project is a good place to start. www.bloodsisters.org/bloodsisters/

Problems with Menstruating

Most abnormalities in menstruation can be treated with easily obtained herbs. If you are irregular, or suffer from PMS, taking two cups of False Unicorn Root tea every day for the second half of your cycle (from ovulation to menstruation) will help regulate your hormones. This is a long treatment, taking about four months to take full effect, but lasting. Herbs that induce menstruation are called emmenogogues. Two such herbs are parsley and ginger. If your period is late or you skipped a period, two or more cups of

strong tea from these herbs should induce menstruation in a few days if it is taken during or after the regular time menstruation is expected. I prefer parsley because it has fewer side effects. Ginger can cause hot flashes and restlessness. If you want to delay your cycle, Yarrow and Shepherds Purse can be taken as tea. It is harder to purposefully delay menstruation than it is to induce it. Reduce your intake of aspirin, caffeine, salt, red meat, and estrogen when you are trying to achieve this.

Yeast Infections

One of the most common and irritating things to happen to a woman's vagina is a yeast infection. If you have been paying attention to your vaginal mucus, a yeast infection can be detected early and treated with organic yogurt or a clove of garlic. Yogurt contains *Lactobacillus acidophilus*, a bacterium that kills excess yeast. Put the yogurt in plastic tampon applicators (the only reason you should have anything to do with tampons) or in the fingers of rubber gloves and freeze them. The yogurt-sicles can be inserted into your vagina to effectively cure an early yeast infection. A more animal-friendly cure involves garlic. Carefully peel the papery skin off a fresh garlic clove. Wrap the clove in gauze or cheesecloth, tying the ends with unwaxed dental floss, and leaving a bit of string dangling so you'll be able to pull it out afterward. Insert this into your vagina and leave it in over night, repeating for several nights. If the infection is severe, or not clearing up, continue the treatment during the day as well, changing the garlic clove every several hours.

Contraception and Abortion

If you pay attention to your cycle, you will know exactly when you are fertile and at risk for becoming pregnant. This awareness will aid contraceptive efforts. Queen Anne's Lace seeds are a well-known and effective contraceptive. They inhibit the production of progesterone so the uterine lining does not grow enough to support a fertilized egg. One teaspoon full of the seeds should be chewed every day from a few days before ovulation until one week after. Chew them thoroughly, even though they taste terrible. Some women also take a teaspoon full for six days

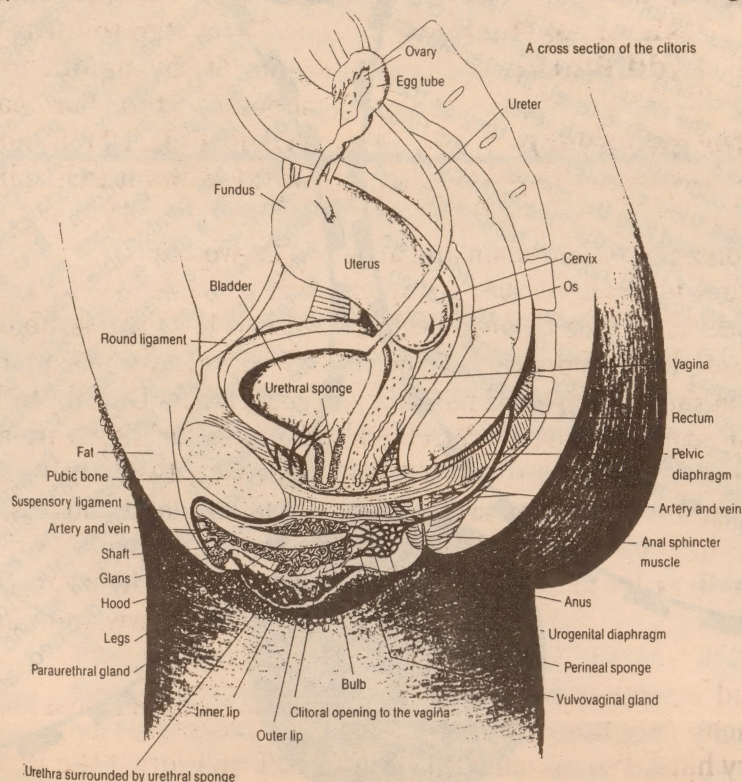
after unprotected sex. If conception has occurred, Queen Anne's Lace seeds may aid in inducing a miscarriage. Other abortifacient herbs include Angelica and Black Cohosh. The use of herbs to induce abortion is a potentially dangerous task, but a worthwhile alternative to the psychologically damaging process that the current medical establishment offers us as a choice. A midwife should be asked to help with the process of a natural abortion.

More Information:

Bloomington Women's Health Collective -
P.O. Box 3207 Bloomington, IN 47402
www.spunk.org/texts/anarcfem/sp000885.txt

They have six pamphlets available on Self-Examination and Treatment. Send them \$14 for all six.

Hot Pants- Do It Yourself Gynecology, Herbal Remedies-Thorough zine on DIY womens' Health. Send them \$2, CD 5756 Succ. C, Montreal, Qu, Canada H2X 3T7



DESTROY THE MACHINE

Previously it was anarchist women speakers like Emma Goldman and Voltairine de Cleyre that advocated "free love". They explained this as abolishing the institution of marriage and the strict adherence to monogamy, nuclear families, defined sex roles and other imprisoning social constraints on women. Considering that men viewed women as property, Goldman applied Proudhon's idea of "Property is Theft" to marriage. Goldman considered marriage no better than prostitution seeing that women were forced into it for economic reasons.

Historically most anarchist men have not shared these views. Famous anarchist theorists like Kropotkin, Proudhon and Bakunin considered women lesser than men. To them women were nurturers, mothers and wives. These men perceived that the class struggle was to come first, and was far more important.

In fact, only until the Spanish Revolution, when women acting without men, rose to the occasion and created the first mass anarcho-feminist organization, the Mujeres Libres (Free Women), was there any large scale organized support for the feminist goals of female liberation within the anarchist movement. The Mujeres Libres clearly articulated liberation "from the triple enslavement to which women have been subjected: enslavement to ignorance, enslavement as women and enslavement

"The will to dominate is a ravenous beast. There are never enough warm bodies to satiate its monstrous hunger. Once alive, this beast grows and grows, feeding on all the life around it, scouring the earth to find new sources of nourishment. This beast lives in each man who batters on female servitude."

Political movements, as many women have known them, have separated women's political activities from their personal dreams of liberation, concentrating only on the male dominated public sphere and leaving the trauma and conflict of the private sphere to women alone. In order to stay in the movement, women are forced to postpone indefinitely or outright abandon their dreams for liberation, under pressure from the overwhelmingly masculine agenda advanced by their "allies". Otherwise they can drop out of the movement because they hold steadfastly to these dreams. Radical communities don't come close to taking women's oppression seriously. If anything these communities will patronize the issues of female emancipation, or tokenize them for their own manipulative purposes. This reactions, sometimes manifesting in "Men's Groups" or "Sexism Workshops", can serve to distract feminist critique and distort feminist goals among a group or community. ** Often the most that comes of the group will be the encouragement of slightly less sexist language while women are around, so as not to offend. Men must come to understand that feminism is not only about the liberation of women, but also about a distinct and integral male struggle to liberate men from a damaging socialization process.

It is absolutely necessary that an explicit anti-authoritarianism be present in a political philosophy on all levels, if it is to bring about true human liberation. No hierarchy is acceptable. No ruler is allowable. No domination is justifiable in a free society. Clearly, if this anti-authoritarian principle is not fundamental to a political philosophy, then domination and hierarchy can exist in theory and practice without resistance.

For thousands of women, feminist analyzes and way of life is the solution to the oppression inflicted upon them. But, as a movement, feminism does not have as a defining characteristic an anti-authoritarian critique of power and domination; therefore, as a political philosophy, it is insufficient for the liberation of anyone.

Since it is possible, and in fact quite likely, that one could be a feminist without sharing an anarchist sensibility toward power, then it is logical to ask if it is possible to be an anarchist without being a feminist. Can anarchism accommodate the oppression of women without contradicting itself? As anarchism is a political philosophy that opposes all relationships of power, it is inherently feminist. An anarchist who supports male domination contradicts the implicit critique of power which is the fundamental principle upon which all of anarchism is built. Sexist anarchists do exist but only by virtue of directly contradicting their own anarchism. This contradiction leaves sexist anarchists open to criticism on their own terms. Just as feminism must incorporate anarchism to be liberator for women, anarchism must be feminist if it is to remain self-consistent.

Yet, most anarchist men have been little better than males everywhere in their subjection of women. *** Thus the absolute necessity of a feminist revolution within anarchism. Otherwise the very principles on which anarchism stand will become utter hypocrisy.

To abolish all forms of domination and oppression we must eradicate all forms of hierarchy and recognize that it is vastly ingrained into our society and ourselves. Therefore the makeup of society and the emotional, mental, spiritual and philosophical structures of ourselves must be deconstructed and rebuilt with new untainted, freedom loving material.

We must seriously consider why women today are a massively oppressed group everywhere. There is an intentional cocoon like film of denial and obliviousness around men and the patriarchy they've created. Men everywhere remain ignorant of women's condition and apathetic to women's oppression and selfishly cruel in response the women everywhere asking for much needed support.

"Remaining ignorant about oneself through a life of inevitable experience is hard; it requires that one refuse to know anything about the world around one, especially who is dying where and why and when and how. Men especially do not want to know, and do not have to know to survive; but if they want to have to be willing to pay the price of knowing, which is pain and responsibility of self-knowledge. Women are unable to refuse to know, because their chances of survival depend on knowing every incidental sign of male will and male power."

IGNORANCE

Anarcha-feminist critique advocates the sharing of knowledge and skills, rotating tasks and responsibilities and setting time aside for discussions of group dynamics. These actions are used to consciously guard against the replication of hierarchical patterns while fostering individual potential. In addition to affirming the need for oppositional action, history attests to the need for long term and careful preparation of the ground for revolution. Yet many men see these actions as useless and distracting logical systems and need to combat them with the same. In this sense, the same damaging and authoritarian structures are duplicated as we mirror our enemies. Marxist anarchist circles that once an egalitarian economic structure is in place, all forms of domination will fall by the wayside. The relevance of anarchism consists largely in its recognition that all forms of oppression don't in the reduce to a matter of economics, but operate on a more subtle and insidious subjective level, in internalized patterns of domination, and therefore must be addressed at this level. Often groups tend to become more like their enemies until they or their policies become "powerful" enough to be co-opted into the enemies' and finally their original purpose has become negated. This is the "inevitability of the Oligarchy". Through this trajectory many lose all hope in humankind and become misanthropes. Anarchists need not fear becoming misanthropes. Anarchists need to recognize that everything that comes of authoritarian societies is destined to consist of hierarchy on some basic structural level and therefore all beliefs and organizations must, be redefined.

Fifty thousand people descend on Seattle during the WTO meetings to have First World Working Groups

Confronting sexism with an argument that makes a group of men uncomfortably silent may allow those men to finally hear the furious cry out of the women they were just joking about whom they had coerced into having sex with (Raped).

APATHY AND COMFORT

In this society no one is comfortable with their identity. We are constantly being told who and what we love and what we want and feel. Our identity is rashly constructed from chaotic childhoods and consuming adulthoods, perpetually being convinced of who we are by all types of conforming tools and marketing weapons. Our identity is rarely, and if barely, created on loving journeys through our soul and with our loved ones. Because this identity is so violently and unpredictably thrown down upon us we cling to it ever more dearly; constantly afraid that if we lose control of a sensible identity that works we will be thrown into the lonely abyss of failure. To remain stable we must conform; but to keep that essential identity we must vary in our preferences and likes. That is where for many people politics comes into play and a person decides they are a socialist, a Nazi, a librarian, a liberal or maybe an anarchist. It is a way of life and requires painful reconstructing on a new identity. It is why people stay in them and fight dearly for power. To a man it is all about "comfort". (Except of course with some women, they are comfortable, that is why people stay in them and fight dearly for power. To a man it is all about "comfort".) Feminism makes men's friends uncomfortable when sexism is addressed. It may even stop them in the middle of a comfortable conversation, it fills men with dread, and it makes them uncomfortable. It stands by as women all around them are systematically devalued, debased, and dehumanized.



ANNIHILATE FEMINISM

OBILITERATE ANARCHY



PACIFISM A

The apathy of men to challenge their position as oppressors is an effective barrier for those activities in confrontation with manifestations of the patriarchy. But, when greater attention is put into understanding men's apathy towards women's suffering comes an awareness that it has much less to do with their apathy and more to do with self preservation. There is a strong connection between the rampant and damaging disease of pacifism within the United States and the way most radicals see feminism as not their issue. Pacifism in America is used as a tool the oppressive classes use to avoid violence and the retaliation that comes from a real challenge to the patriarchy, enough to require the strong arm of it, manifested in the State or other staunch supporters of the male agenda, to react with extreme prejudice. It would risk bringing the same sort of brutal repression down on them. When it comes to affectively confronting the running of the patriarchy, men usually consider the threat of physical violence towards them, as in death, prison terms, beatings or acquisition of a fear filled life, distasteful and abhorrent. That is when men really speak out and feminism is labeled: "A needless liability."

In theory anarchism goes beyond feminism, beyond most other liberatory movements, in its relentless quest for human freedom. Certainly there are people working within other movements who share anarchism's aversion to power; however, any political movement that does not have at its core an anti-authoritarian critique of power leaves itself open to anarchist questioning, including anarchism itself. The gift of anarchism lies in this critique- a thoughtful but relentless questioning of authority and power, one which seeks to create a world where all may live in freedom. If anarchist dialogue and actions are bereft of feminist ideals and those same standards are applied, anarchism may turn out to be just another confused ideology with fanatical morality and endless hypocrisy; vulnerable to attack by academics, Homeland Security, lovers and children, all wanting to expose this entity as the hypocritical and pathetic creature it is.

The term anarchy-feminist shouldn't be necessary. Anarchism should be sufficient. But it isn't. Not the way things are.

Destroy Capitalism. End Patriarchy. Smash homophobia and Racism. These are all obviously essential tasks in the building of a new and truly human world. Marxists, socialists, anarchists and feminists would agree. But what all are missing in practice and all but anarchism are missing in theory: is that we must abolish all forms of domination. That's not just a slogan, and it is the hardest task of all. Personal revolutions always are. It means we have to see throughout the spectacle, through to every aspect of domi-

PACIFISM B

The preoccupation with avoiding actions that might "provoke violence" is not based on a sincere belief that violence will, or even can, truly be avoided. Pacifists, no less than their unpacifist counterparts, are quite aware that violence already exists as an integral component in the execution of state policies and requires no provocation; this is a formative basis of their doctrine. What is at issue then cannot be a valid attempt to stave off or even minimize violence per se. Instead, it can only be a conscious effort not to refocus state violence in such a way that it would directly impact American pacifists themselves. This is true even when it can be shown that the tactics which could trigger such a refocusing might in themselves alleviate a real measure of the much more massive state-inflicted violence occurring elsewhere; better that 100,000 Arab children perish under a hail of cluster bombs and uranium missiles than America's principled progressives suffer real physical pain while rendering their government's actions impracticable. Pacifism is racist and classist, and because women bear the brunt of all exploitation, they do by far most of the work on earth etc., pacifism is sexist. In displacing massive state violence onto people of color, and the poor and oppressed, both outside and inside the mother country, rather than absorbing any real measure of it themselves (even when their physical intervention might undercut the state's ability to inflict violence on the above mentioned), pacifists can only be viewed as being objectively racist, sexist and classist. Within the context of pacifism, this basic strain must be considered as complicated by an extremely convoluted process of victim blaming under the guise of "anti-racism", "anti-sexism" and such. Pacifism is suicidal. In its core impulse to prostrate itself before the obvious reality of the violence inherent in state power, pacifism not only inverts Emiliano Zapata's famous dictum that "It is better to die on one's feet than to live on one's knees"; it actually posits the proposition that it is best to die on one's knees and seek to achieve his result as a matter of principle.

Try carefully placing and lighting five one gallon jugs of gasoline (A gasoline soaked sponge with b-day candles stuck in it that don't go out in the wind) at the strategic points at the structure of a saw mill that cuts old growth. Leave the graffiti of a women's symbol only. Someone might make the connection while reading about it in the paper.

INDIFFERENCE

"Boys are birthed and raised by men. At some point, boys become women. All children hear the wind whisper and the trees cry. To the child, there is no clear line separating objects from living things; and whatever has life has life very much like our own. But adult men treat women, and often girls, and sometimes other males, as objects. Adult men are convinced and sincere in their perception of adult women in particular as objects. How does it happen that the male child whose sense of life is so vivid that he cannot grant or even imagine the common humanity of women? The boy has a choice: remain loyal to the mother who is in reality degraded, without authority against the father, unable to protect the child from the father's violence or the violence of other adult men, or become a man, one who has the power and the right to hurt, to use force, to use his will and physical strength over and against women and children. The boy chooses to become a man because it is better to be a man than a woman. Becoming a man requires that the boy learn to be indifferent to the fate of women. Indifference requires that the boy learn to experience women as objects. The poet, the mystic, the prophet, the so-called sensitive man of any stripe, will still hear the wind whisper and the trees cry. But to him, women will be mute. He will have learned to be deaf to ally himself with other men in the hope that in order to ally himself with other men in the hope that they will not treat him as a child, that is, as one who belongs with the women."

Men in this society claim all public and private space as their own. Help create a woman friendly or woman only space in your community.

"Don't speak to me of revolution until you're ready to eat rats to survive."

"As true anarchists and as true feminists, we say dare to dream the impossible, and never settle for less than total transformation of the impossible into reality."

nation in our lives and others, destroy the stage sets, and know that there are other, far more wonderful, ways of doing things. It means we have to do more than react in programmed rebellions - we must act. Each person acting autonomously it becomes a collective action. An anarchy-feminist revolution will be very difficult to do. The individual cannot change anything very much. The egalitarian couple, if there ever is one, will be hounded across the face of the earth by power obsessed societies and individuals; but for that reason we have to work together. With people whom you may have never considered revolutionary. Talk your neighbors, those bored kids down the street (They need people like us to look up to), many elderly were never given the chance, your parents need a good talking to. The work must also be done in mutually supportive environments, places that can combat the oppressive atmospheres we live in every day; somewhere without domination and without groups or individuals delegating control over what we do and what we want to build. Can the socialists do it? Can the hippies? Can the pretentious people who work at that video store? Can your partner? You know the answer to that. Work with them when it makes sense to, but give up nothing. Concede nothing to them, or to anyone else.

++++ This script was hastily thrown together, carefully taken apart, lovingly questioned. Some of it was brutally stolen and carefully paraphrased from authors: Susan Brown, Ward Churchill, Peggy Kornegger, Carol Ehrlich and anonymous folks from the ethernet... And still other parts were innovatively and decidedly conceived from old pains and new loves deep inside me. Quotes from Andrea Dworkin (search: Andrea Dworkin Web Page) and others from online as well. ++++



WOMYN'S TECH: GENDER CHANGERS

by PAZ

I recently attended the H2K2 Hackers Conference at the Hotel Pennsylvania in New York City from July 12th to 12th. I decided to attend the conference because I was interested in learning about this culture, not being a 'hacker' myself. I've been apart of the IndyMedia video team since March and we are closely linked with the 2600 Hacker's Quarterly that sponsors the conference (their fourth) and has generously shared it's space with the IndyMedia Collective for the last few years.

I offered to volunteer so I could help with setting up the infrastructure, all of which fascinates me. Unfortunately I missed out and ended up on lots of garbage collecting duty! (which was fine) During the weekend, I spent most of my time listening to speakers and attending workshops I heard an announcement for "all those interested in this new support group, 'Gender Changers' meet by info desk tomorrow- Saturday, the second day into conference, at high noon."

The GenderChanger Academy is a nonprofit organization by womyn for womyn. Its primary goal is to improve womyn's understanding with regards to computer hardware, operating systems and software. It was founded in Amsterdam, The Netherlands in March 2000, borne out of the ASCII (Amsterdam Subversive Code for Information Interchange), a free internet workspace.

So, the next day, a very interesting mixed bag of people of both sexes from all over the east coast, with every level of experience and ranging in age from teens to retirement, met to learn about this group. Two womyn from the Philly Academy (a newer sprout that sprung from the ASCII workspace during a visit) introduced the group.

The Philadelphia GCA follows the same model as the Dutch group, though they operate in an autonomous fashion. The GCA supports open source software -- and each new group is free to choose their own course of action. However, the founding groups' intention was NOT to teach any classes on proprietary operating systems or software!

What excited me was that there were actually people interested in 'helping' others less knowledgeable and experienced in skill sharing, teaching, offering a hands on experience and all FEMALE driven.

What an odd' feeling for me to be at the conference with so many men coming up to me and thanking me for coming and participating and acknowledged me for my female presence in a 95% male dominate crowd in a non-sexist way, just a for being a

different 'Gender' AND for being a 'Changer'! Unfortunately that wasn't everyone's experience as lots of frustrated men bound to computers 24/7 are completely disrespectful when they aren't in the presence of CyberFemales and have to interact with the real thing.

What is the GCA?

GenderChangers was founded in 2000 by Tali, brbr and Sara with Sisi. Donna, Maya, Sol and Jane joined later. As aforementioned, the group was formed in Amsterdam at the ASCII workspace. GCA encourages women to crash computers and to put them back together again, preferably with an improved installation.

the world. Hence the GCA promotes D.I.Y. and the use of Open Source products.

How do we do it?

(PHILLY/AMSTERDAM)

The GCA in Amsterdam began by offering hardware classes. The classes consist of three or four days, spread across three (or four) weeks, of tech training where computers are taken apart. Their innards are examined and discussed, and participants come away with the knowledge of how the fundamentals of computers physically work. The Amsterdam GCA recently began to offer other types of classes as well, such as a linux installation class and a basic internet security class.

If all goes well, we will start teaching GCA classes in Philadelphia in the late summer or early fall 2002.

Quality Guarantee?

The women working for the GCA do not claim or pretend to be experts. They are not. They are everyday women who have the idea, the will and who take time and energy to work at the goals of the GCA. Being an autodidact is

the best way to learn. The Internet is in service of this vision.

What is a genderchanger? (The Hardware)

Technically speaking a genderchanger is a small device or adaptor that changes the "sex" of computer cables. It has two sides with holes or two sides with pins, making any connection between port and computer cable a possibility. The holes are female and the pins are male. In a more figurative sense a genderchanger can be seen as someone who wants to change the way the world perceives things, for example that computers are for men only but we all know this is false, right?

Why a computer hardware course?

Women work a lot with computers but mostly with the software. They generally know very little about what is under the hood of their piece of equipment. Hardware is a mystery, a barrier, but it can also be alot of fun. Education and Playing is a way to get to know how stuff works. Knowing how it works, being able to interact with it gives one a sense of control and independence. Secretaries of today should have a 'toolkit' in their millennium witchbag to be able to Do It Themselves!

Computers are still in the prototype phase but that doesn't mean that as soon as something is outdated, it is useless. The GCA supports the practice of maintenance and the use of secondhand parts when ever reasonable. Similarly, knowledge and skills should NOT be in the hands of a select group of individuals. This asks for misuse and imbalance in

I would like to see an Academy start up here in New York City, and am trying to coordinate womyn that are interested. I have a couple of locations in mind for a 'home' base, complete with old broken hardware for us to fix! We need a few very skilled peeps who are interested in being apart of the 'core group' that could start teaching the rest of us. Together we can shape this group and build another arm of GenderChangers in order to spread the necessary skills needed to retain and regain our Autonomy in this challenging society. These skills are more important now than ever before.

Contact info is listed below for both the Dutch flavor, the newer Philly contingent and the group starting in NYC. Please keep in mind that at the moment the GCA is run by a small group of volunteer women and they will be in touch as quickly as they are able. Be patient!

Dutch group:

<http://www.genderchangers.org/>

Philly:

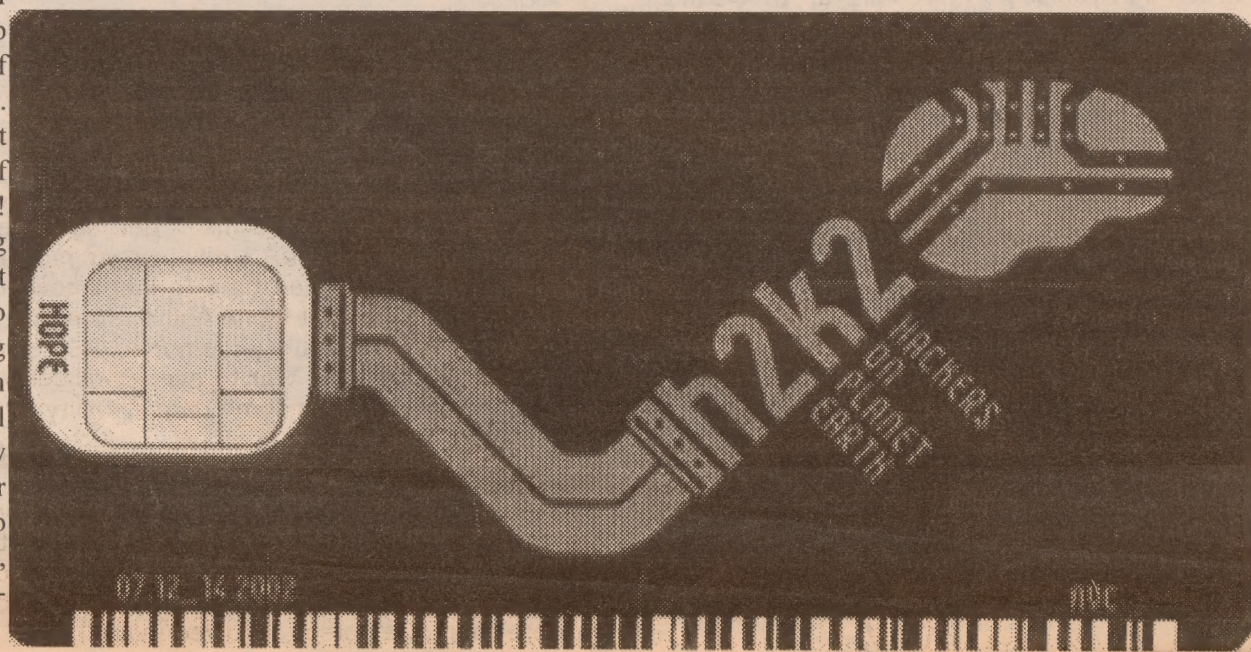
info@phillygca.org

phillygca-announce@phillygca.org

<http://www.phillygca.org/>

To get involved in forming Genderchanger NYC:

infusion@freethemedia.org



IN THIS CURRENT ERA OF OUR GLOBAL CULTURE OF PATRIARCHY

MAZE DOMINATION WHICH ALIENATES PEOPLE INTO GENDER AND
INDOCTRINATES PEOPLE INTO ROLES THAT ACCOMPANY THOSE GENDERS,
WOMEN SUBMISSIVE/ MEN DOMINATING. -

WE FIND A VERY DRAMATIC LEVEL OF INEQUALITY.

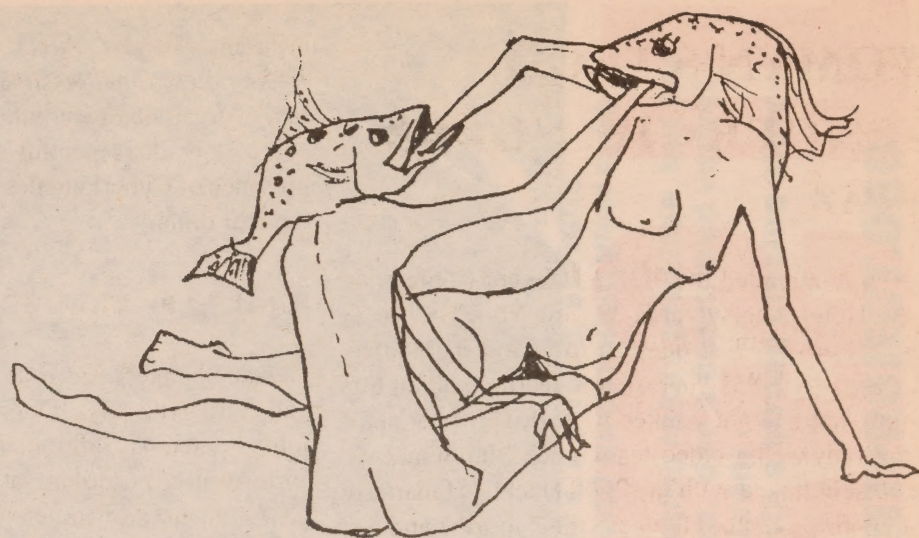
SINCE MEN PLAY THE OPPRESSOR IT BECOMES NECESSARY FOR US TO BE
ACCOUNTABLE FOR OUR ACTIONS/ MISTAKES...

IT IS OUR RESPONSIBILITY AS PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS EXPERIENCING
MALE PRIVILEGE TO DECONSTRUCT INTERNALIZED WAYS OF THINKING
AND ACTING TOWARDS WOMEN AS WELL AS HOW WE THINK AND ACT
TOWARDS EACH OTHER.

EGALITARIAN SEXUALITY ROCKS.

When you and your partner are completely out of your mind, totally attentive to each other, and responding to every little thing, sex is incredible. This is not the sex that you see on video or framed in some magazine. I'm talking about sex that is fully consensual, safe as possible, and made insanely great by your full attention to make your partner feel good and be comfortable, and your partner doing the same for you. It seems like it rarely happens this way.

Do any of the following situations sound familiar: Your partner asks if you're safe and you don't know; the closer you and your partner get, the more she pulls away or the quieter she gets; you don't have a condom, and you'll go as far as she'll let you; you do have a condom but don't put it on until she tells you to; you think you are good in bed but have no idea what your partner thinks; you know the "pill" is a contraceptive but have no idea what it does, how your partner got it, or what the gynecologist does during those check-ups...you're not alone. At one time or another every man can not only identify with these but can also add something to the list. However, I know few men who are aware of



how careless they are or want to hurt someone. I don't know any who want a sexually transmitted disease, have crappy sex or to become a surprise parent.

The truth is, when it comes to sex, men suck. We are taught to "make the first move," and to believe crap "her mouth says no, but her body says yes". We can get off in two minutes flat if we want to. We don't have to worry about looking like a sex object everyday, or realize that every other dipshit we pass each day will be jerking off over what's beneath our pants. For all intents and purposes, we can forget about our penises until we need to use them. What do we worry about? We usually don't take the responsibility to even think about buying or using condoms. Few men that I know think of getting tested for STD's even once, let alone every six months. I have never met a man who paid for his partner's gyn exams, taken time to learn how the pill works and what negative effects it has, let alone find out anything about the anatomy of their partner. We are so busy memorizing Simpsons' quotes, or the history of the Spanish Civil War to even consider learning about women's bodies. Men need to take some responsibility. Wake up!

Sex should be fun, and mutually satisfying. Sex is not only intercourse. Sex does not ever have to even involve intercourse. More often than not our society teaches women to be passive and not seek out their own real pleasure, and we tend not to know how to please our partner. In fact many men believe sex ends when they come, or that cuming is the goal of sex. This is absurd because there is usually more than one person involved in sex.

Which brings me to another absurdity of our culture- that it is "dirty" to go down on a woman. That is "smells bad..." or some other bullshit. Rest assured men smell a lot down there too. But once you start having any sex at all you will notice how these smells are not "bad" at all but are important and very erotic aphrodisiacs. There is nothing better than the smell of your lover's sweaty body after a good ol' romp in the sack. Moreover oral sex can play a very intricate part in providing a much deeper connection to your partner- both physically and emotionally- when you provide orgasm for your partner your relationship can grow much stronger.



Here are a few tips on how to locate and stimulate the g-spot: You put 2 fingers inside of your partner with your palm facing up, move them in a beckoning motion while exerting light pressure towards your partner's belly. Keep in mind that the G-spot is not the only way to stimulate a female orgasm, there is also the clitoris, which is located at the top of the lips. If you are having trouble just ask your partner, they will probably be eager to help you. Try combining this with oral sex and other forms of intimacy. Always keep your finger nails clean and trim, with no sharp edges. It is very sensitive in there and dirty finger nails can give your partner an infection.

Probably by now you've heard of anal sex - but probably think that it is for men who like to have sex with other men. Well, whether you identify as queer, straight, bi, gay, or trans your prostate will give you pleasure. Practice sometime when you are masturbating by sticking your index finger with some lubricant (Ky jelly or make do with massage oil or baby lotion and the such.) in your ass a few inches and see if you dig. I'm quite sure you will.

When you feel like you can't satisfy your partner it is never a bad thing to ask for help. Trust me, so many women rarely hear the simple questions "does this feel good" or "is there anything you want me to do?" and will love to tell you what they want.

However don't get mad if your partner can't help you out just then; it may take time to form a closer relationship where your partner can tell you how she feels and what she wants.

Remember too that every woman has probably gone through a lot more than you when it comes to sexual identity and esteem. Women are encouraged to be confused and submissive, and men are encouraged to take charge and be decisive. Don't be afraid to talk to your partner about your sexuality, and your sex lives together outside of the bedroom- in a car, a roof top or wherever... This will help you form a better sex-positive relationship.

Most importantly: Intimacy exists outside any genital-sex. Always support a woman's right to remain abstinent for periods of reflection or for as long as she feels, including forever. Also, question and read up on the negative effects and dynamics of domination within sexual relationships and the important implications of intercourse in this frighteningly sexist society.

The relationship/s we have with our partner/s are very important in shaping ourselves and expressing and building deep emotional bonds.

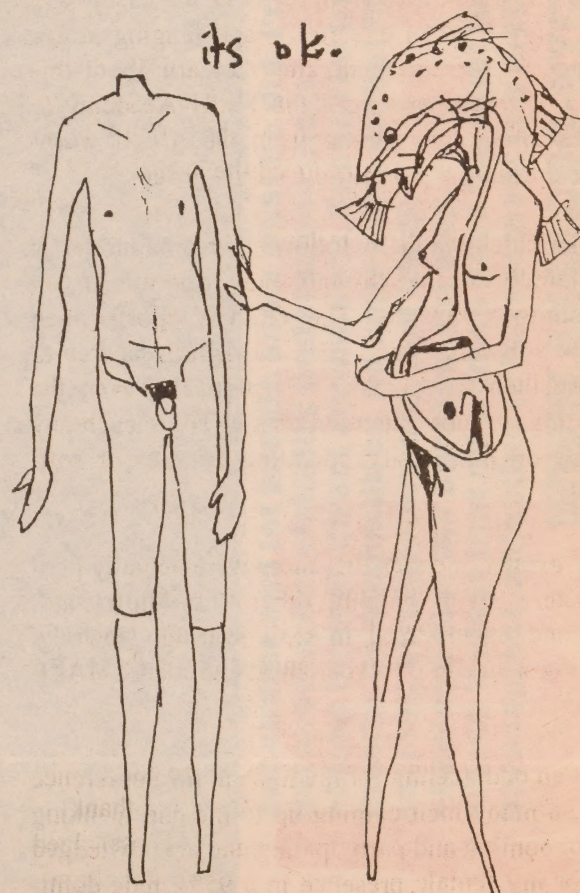
A simple whisper or feeling of your partner's breath on your neck or having your partner's fingers explore your body can feel so much better and provide so much more ecstasy than some of the craziest sex you have before your parents/roommates get home.

Most text taken from a collective in the Denver metro area. You can reach them at: dapco@watchmail.com

We really regret having dialogue on queer sexuality absent. ATF apologizes for the onesidedness.

im sorry.

its ok.



YOU PRETEND SHE LIKES IT





SEXUAL HARASSMENT LEADS TO SEXUAL ASSAULT

MAKE ALL SPACES SAFE FOR WOMEN

COMPLIANCE LEADS TO VIOLENCE. STOP SEXUAL HARASSMENT.

CONFRONTATION FOR WOMEN:

- > Do the unexpected: Name the behavior. Whatever he's just done, say it, and be specific.
- > Hold the harasser accountable for his actions. Don't make excuses for him; don't pretend it didn't really happen. Take charge of the encounter and let people know what he did. Privacy protects harassers, but visibility undermines them.
- > Make honest, direct statements. Speak the truth (no threats, no insults, no obscenities, no appeasing verbal fluff and padding). Be serious, straightforward, and blunt.
- > Demand that the harassment stop.
- > Make it clear that all women have the right to be free from sexual harassment. Objecting to harassment is a matter of principle.

WWW.ANARCHO-NYC.NET

IF YOU SEE SOMEONE BEING HARASSED, COME TO HER AID!

- > Stick to your own agenda. Don't respond to the harasser's excuses or diversionary tactics. His behavior is the issue. Say what you have to say, and repeat it if he persists.
- > Reinforce your statements with strong, self-respecting body language: eye contact, head up, shoulders back, a strong, serious stance. Timid, submissive body language will undermine your message.
- > Respond at the appropriate level. Fine-tuning takes practice, but it's not usually necessary to blast the harasser. Use a combined verbal and physical response to physical harassment.
- > End the interaction on your own terms, with a strong closing statement.

WWW.STREETHARASSMENTPROJECT.ORG

Sense of Humus

The Liberty Cabbage Theatre Revival Presents:
Vaudeville on Grease

At 3:45 p.m. we rolled up to the Amherst Chinese Restaurant to pick up 20 gallons of their used vegetable oil. We walked through the alley and entered in through the kitchen. We were greeted by five apron clad workers that were startled by the idea of two women scavenging oil that once housed vegetarian egg rolls. We scurried into the back of the kitchen to find four gritty containers of thick substance some call waste but we call fuel. It was the jackpot of all grease-dark, but not too chunky. This stuff would carry us all the way up to Vermont. We had done it. We bought a diesel school bus and converted it to run on used vegetable grease (with a little help from our friends at greasecar.com).

This transformation on wheels would carry our troupe, the Liberty Cabbage Theatre Revival and our load of cardboard, dry goods and props for our summer tour across Toronto, Vermont, Western Mass, Pennsylvania and Maine.

The Liberty Cabbage Theatre Revival is a radical living culture of primarily female activists who are making social change through art, music and performance. We formed in the wake of September 11th in Western Massachusetts with a commitment to create the world in which we would like to live. We have since joined forces with other activists and puppeteers across the East coast. All of our performances are collectively written and designed, with decision-making done through consensus. The show we are touring with this summer is called A Sense of Humus, a puppet-filled musical about agriculture, gardening and the politics of genetically modified food.

In 2001, over 85 million acres of genetically engineered crops were grown in the United States. These crops mainly soy, corn, canola and cotton reappear in processed foods in our supermarkets. Around 60-70 percent of the processed foods on the supermarket shelves today contain genetically modified organisms. GMO foods include Doritos, Coca-Cola, Oreo's as well as many "healthy" foods, including Morningstar brand items. These foods are not labeled, and consumers are not warned of the risk in consuming them. Therefore, we have unconsciously become the guinea pigs of biotechnology corporations like Monsanto. There has been little comprehensive independent research done on the health risks of genetically modified foods. What is known is that genetic engineering alters the chemical composition of food, which can lead to increased toxicity, the creation of allergens and altered nutritional value.

NORIMAKI VEGAN SUSHI

INGREDIENTS:

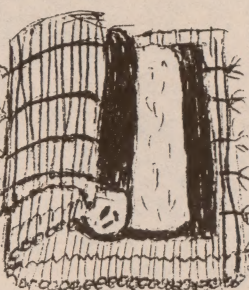
1. Package Sushi Nori- available at most health food stores and Asian markets
2. Tempeh
 - *1 package tempeh, slice length wise into 1/2 inch strips
 - *1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger
 - *2 sprigs fresh sage
 - *3 tablespoons olive oil
 - *1 tablespoon maple syrup
 - *4 tablespoons tamari/soy sauce
 - *1/4 tablespoon cayenne pepper
3. Rice
 - *3 cups rice
 - *4 cups water
 - *1-2 teaspoons rice vinegar
 - *1/2 teaspoon salt
 - *1 teaspoon sugar (optional)
4. Veggies
 - *1 carrot sliced length wise into 1/4 inch wide strips
 - *1 cucumber sliced length wise into 1/4 inch wide strips
 - *1 avocado sliced inside (see drawing)
5. Garnish
 - *1-2 tablespoons umeboshi paste
 - *1-2 tablespoons mustard
6. Serve with:
 - *pickled ginger
 - *wasabi- Japanese horseradish



1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees fahrenheit
2. Arrange tempeh in a baking dish large enough to hold strips in a single layer. In a bowl, whisk together ginger, olive oil, maple syrup, tamari/soy sauce, water, cayenne pepper, and pour over tempeh. Place sage on top and cover with foil. Bake 30-40 minutes until most of the marinade has been absorbed. Remove sage and allow tempeh to cool.
3. While the tempeh bakes, make the rice. In a large pot over high heat, combine rice, water, vinegar, salt, and sugar. Bring to a boil. Reduce the heat to low and simmer, covered for 20 minutes, or until the water has been absorbed and the rice is tender. Let stand for five minutes before transferring rice into a bowl to let cool.
4. Place a sheet of nori on a bamboo mat, shiny side down. Moisten your hands and scoop up a small handful (about 1/3 to 1/2 cup) of rice. Spread the rice evenly on the nori. Leave 1 inch along the top and 1/2 inch along the side of the nori exposed.
5. Spread about 3/4 teaspoon umeboshi paste and mustard over the rice. Starting 1 inch up from the bottom, lay out a piece of tempeh, a slice of carrot, and/or cucumber, and some avocado.
6. Lightly moisten the top of the nori and roll into a cylinder. Apply even pressure on the roll. Repeat with the remaining ingredients.
7. Slice the norimaki into 1/2 inch rounds with a sharp knife. Serve with tamari/soy sauce, pickled ginger, and wasabi.

MEDICINAL QUALITIES:

- Avocado- remedy for ulcers; easily digested fat
- Brown Rice- diuretic; thirst quenching; nourishing and good for nursing mothers
- Carrots- cleans out intestines, good for digestion and rich in vitamin A
- Cucumbers- diuretic; counteracts toxins and lifts depression
- Ginger- used to help diarrhea, anorexia, vomiting and indigestion
- Mustard- expels phlegm, clears stomach and congestion
- Nori- sea vegetable rich in vitamins A, B, and niacin; treats painful urination and cough with yellow mucus
- Tempeh- fermented soybean patty, natural antibiotic, contains omega 3 oils and B12.
- Umeboshi paste- pickled plums that treat indigestion and diarrhea; relives dysentery; removes worms



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In A Sense of Humus we address these issues and explain the history of gene technology, which has its roots in the "green revolution" where chemical fertilizers producing higher yields of crops were offered as the solution to world hunger. These fertilizers were made up of chemicals left over from WWII. We also explore the culture of resistance to these gene technologies with sustainable agricultural methods including community-supported agriculture (CSA) and composting. We have a life-sized compost pile in which the audience helps us decide what materials can be composted and what cannot. We also illustrate the profit-driven biotechnology industry with a 10-foot tall stilt walking MonSatan who reveals his true motives to the crowd with his money-hungry eyes, packets of modified Starlink Corn. Along with our drag queen tomato that teaches seed saving techniques, one of our other favorite activities is altering good old patriotic tunes with a twist of cabbage. Check out our version of the star-spangled banner cabbage style:

"Oh say can't you see what is biotechnology

Puts more profits in the hands of those who have too much money

See the apples waxy glare, smell pollutants in the air

Tech vowed to end hunger once before, and on our soils they waged a war

There's a more sustainable way, farmers markets, CSA

Land reform and fair trade, how a just world is made

I resist what's capitalist, that don't make me a terrorist

In a land that is free It's patriotic to protest!"

We have performed the show to a mix of audiences in a variety of venues. We designed A Sense of Humus to have something for everyone, even for people who have never heard of the term genetically modified food. The reaction has been very positive. Many who were not aware of these issues respond well in the question and answer period we hold after each show. We acted as a traveling information exchange, bringing updates on what communities have accomplished with us as we made our way down from Vermont, where they have successfully convinced over 20 towns to issue a moratorium on genetically engineered crops.

To learn more about GMO's, contact www.gefoodalert.org or greenpeace.org.

In the New York City area check out the group SOS Foods. To find out more about Liberty Cabbage, our bus, and our continued pollination tour, check out our web site at:

magnetictape.org/asenseofhumus.

Until next time, hold on to your pitchforks...

acupressure for ♀

What is Acupressure?

Acupressure is an ancient healing therapy originating in China. It began from the observation that when you are hurt, your hand instinctively moves to the area of injury. This action would generally provide some pain relief, and Chinese physicians explored the matter further. They found that applying fingertip pressure at certain points consistently helped to alleviate pain and provide relief to physical, mental, and emotional distress. Acupressure can be used to strengthen and balance your body's energies, creating "optimal well-being of your body, mind, and spirit."

How to Use Acupressure

* Wash your hands and make sure they are dry and warm before applying acupressure. Be gentle, work slowly and carefully.

* Using the tip of your index finger, approach the specific point location slowly. Move your finger around the area, probing gently until you feel a slight dip that identifies the acupressure point.

* Press in lightly, holding a point until you feel the tissues underneath your fingertip soften and relax. Press into the point slowly and steadily.

* The points often become warm to your touch, a sign of releasing tension. Slower breathing is a sign that you're beginning to relax, and the acupressure is taking effect.

* The point is completely released when it's neither warm nor cool in temperature and is pulsing steadily. The pulsation is similar to the pulse in your wrists and neck, but not as strong. When the point has released, ease your fingertip off slowly. An abrupt release of pressure feels uncomfortable.

Precautions

Two common mistakes are inaccurate point location and applying pressure for too brief a period of time. Take your time, and use your intuition. When you begin to feel relaxed or your symptoms are relieved after a self-treatment session, you are successfully applying acupressure. Keep practicing to develop sensitivity. Acupressure is valuable knowledge to care for yourself and help heal others as well.

If you are sick, tired, or weak, be gentle and gradual with your touch. Never apply acupressure directly to wounds, sprains, or bruises. Some points should not be used during pregnancy, and are indicated in the diagrams. Always ask permission before using acupressure on other people.

Acupressure for PMS

PMS stands for Premenstrual Syndrome- It is different for every woman. The symptoms return every month, and vary from fluid retention, emotional distress, sweet cravings, indigestion, pain, and acne. These symptoms can begin up to two weeks before your period, and may be mild or very severe for half a month. PMS symptoms usually increase with age.

Water Retention- Water retention is fluid accumulation in or around your cells that causes abdominal bloating, breast swelling and tenderness. It also leads to numbness, earache, muscular aching, dizziness, wrist pain, and headaches. Acupressure points are effective in clearing sinuses, which relieves premenstrual sinus headaches.

PMS and Emotional Distress- PMS can cause severe mood swings, feelings of insecurity, low self-esteem, and inexplicable feelings of fear and anger. Can also cause immense frustration and disrupt your life and relationships. Cut down on stress and start acupressure self-help program.

Premenstrual Fatigue- Causes for fatigue are linked with water retention. Water-logging causes a shift in mineral action, retaining sodium while excreting potassium. This makes you weak, tired, and irritable. Restore this balance by eliminating salty foods. Eat foods rich in potassium such as kelp, apricots, peaches, and bananas. Supplement with Acupressure work.

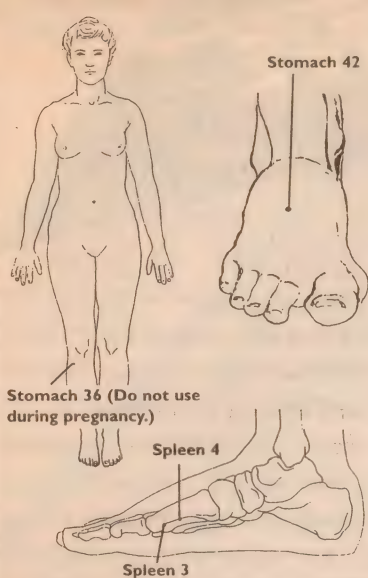
Sweet Cravings- Biological factors are an insufficient supply of B-vitamins and magnesium in your body that break down sugar into glucose in the metabolic process. Your body interprets a deficiency of these nutrients as a need for more sugar. To combat this, eat high-energy foods throughout the day that are rich in B vitamins and magnesium.

Period Pain and Indigestion- Cramps are uterine spasms, so focus your Acupressure treatment on relaxation during this time. Tense muscles in the abdomen aggravate period pain and indigestion. Minimize pain by doing acupressure twice a day, combined with deep breathing and yoga. Natural muscle relaxants can be good as well, and for some sex helps to relieve the tension.

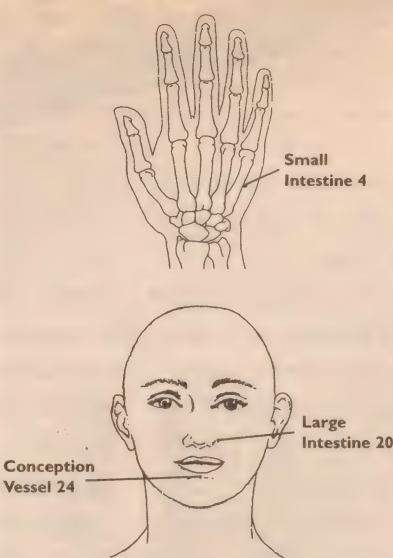
Acne- Your adrenal glands produce more male hormones during PMS and activate oil glands in your skin. Use a balanced diet with minimum sugar, fat, and chemical additives all the time, but especially to prevent acne. Acne is a sign of your body's inner health, so treat the symptoms that cause acne, mainly poor diet and lack of exercise.

(Info from: "Acupressure for women")

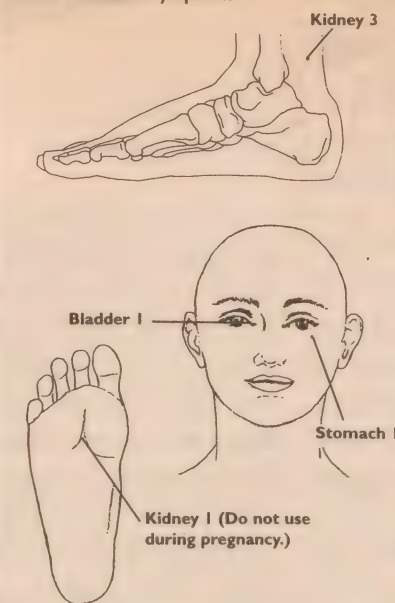
Acupressure Points for Premenstrual Sweet Craving



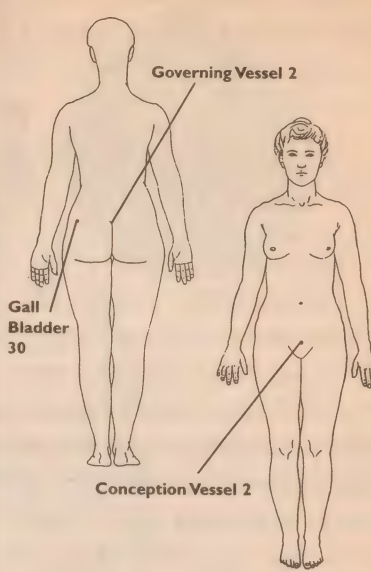
Acupressure Points for Premenstrual Acne



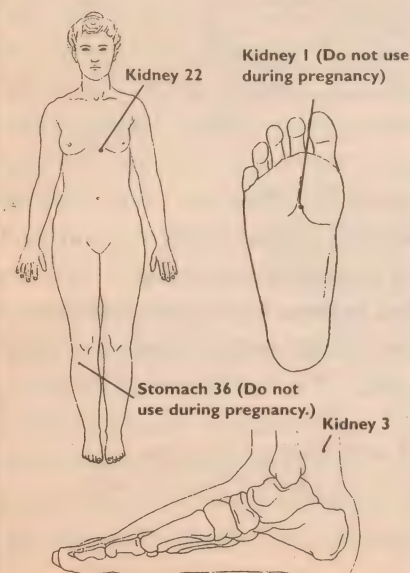
Acupressure Points for Water Retention Symptoms



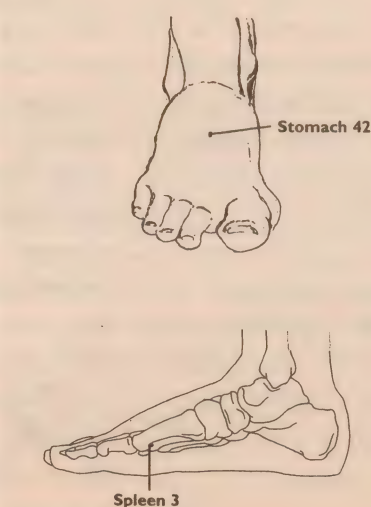
Acupressure Points to Relieve Pelvic Tension



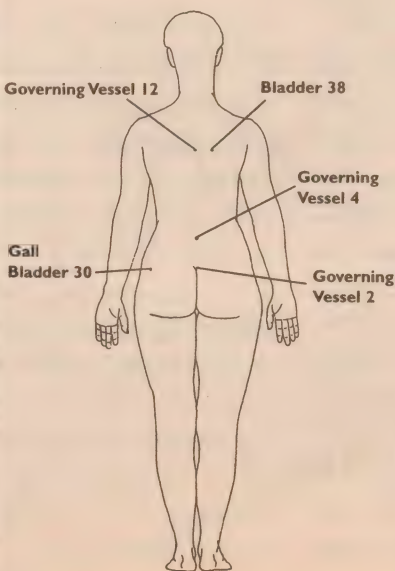
Acupressure Points for Premenstrual Fatigue



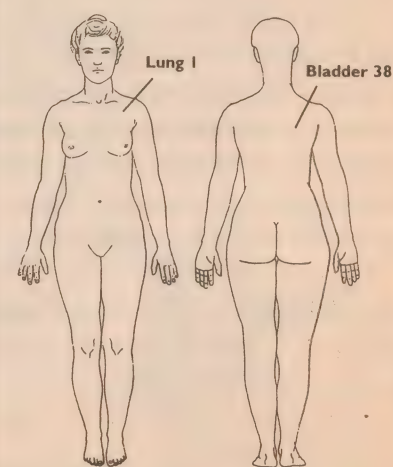
Acupressure Points for Period Pain and Indigestion



Acupressure Points for Backache and Muscular Pain



Acupressure Points for Emotional Symptoms of PMS



Katie

was a physically fit 30yr old mother of two toddlers when she decided to leave her abusive partner of many years. Never having sought help due to the isolation she faced in their rural lakeside cabin, she did not know that the most violent attacks from intimate partners are brought on by the victim's decision to separate (or, curiously, by the announcement of a pregnancy). As she loaded her children into their car, (she had made a secret set of keys the last time she had gone for groceries), her man went for the semi-automatic weapon he had kept and

feminists. In order to maintain a society as rigidly hierarchical as ours, the threat to women's physical and mental safety must be maintained. This is the case, especially if we dare to challenge the authority of patriarchy. Disabling women is a very efficient way to maintain the hierarchy paradigm since women comprise over half of all people: a "minority" that is actually a majority, a trump card.

The most obvious forms of sexism are those that which disallow freedom-minded women a voice in the public media or in any political position that promises power, as well as the overtly sexist policies of our government. On a more localized level, there is a gradient of mechanisms used to oppress: denied access to an education that is honest about women, access to health care, to the resources that influence the democratic process, to the validation of rape as a crime, and to abortion as a right. Lastly, on a

criminals, and liars. Their word is useless, yet the social workers word is all-powerful. In "the system", as poor people generally refer to social service agencies and the webs they create, domestic violence victims are often looked upon with skepticism and disgust. Their children are removed from their custody if they do not leave the abusive partner when an ACS (Administration of Childrens Services) worker demands them to. Of course, no child should live in a dangerous home. But where should a woman go who has no access to the household money, who has been alienated from her friends and family due to the isolation she experiences in the relationship, or who has real concerns about her physical safety if she makes an attempt to leave? The ACS worker never suggests that the abusive partner (usually the man in a heterosexual relationship) should get picked up by the police and leave the apartment. Instead, the ACS worker insists that the woman and her children leave the home and enter a shelter while the abuser remains master of the castle.

The ultimate form of control is to hold a womans children hostage and give her a list of things she must do in order to get them back. There are between 30 and 40 thousand children in foster care on any given year in NYC. In addition are those moms that are dealing with ACS in a "prevention" stage. This is when the parents are, for one reason or another, deemed potential abusers.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE and SOCIAL WORK from an ANARCHIST PERSPECTIVE by C. Inza DeBoise

intimidated her with when she spoke of leaving. Katie was stepping into the driver's seat when he unloaded the gun into her. He then sped away in his truck, leaving her for dead. Katie and her children arrived at the women's shelter after several months in various medical facilities. Help had come for Katie, but not in time to save her left leg, which was completely destroyed by the shots sustained. Katie was lucky to have her life.

The statistics read like a war zone. 30% to 80% of women in emergency rooms are there due to domestic violence, or "intimate partner violence" as it's sometimes called. 50% of women homicide victims in NYC are killed by intimate partners. Teenagers comprise almost 10% of those victims. Feminists believe these statistics quite low, stating that many boyfriends and husbands don't get caught or that the crime goes unsolved, or the woman remains "missing" (disappeared). Deaths due to domestic violence are comparable to those by drunk drivers in some areas. The NYC domestic violence hotline receives about 8,000 calls a month. The NYC Gay and Lesbian Anti-Violence project serves over 500 victims of DV a year. Each year about 700,000 people are stalked by intimate partners or ex-partners in the United States. This includes 10% of female college students. These statistics are from the NYC mayor's office and Sanctuary for Families, all available on the Internet.

I've worked as a domestic violence (DV) counselor for about six years now. I do this work from an anarcha-feminist perspective. That means that I have a political analysis of DV. This perspective sets me apart from other "social workers": the vast majority of whom don't even identify as liberal

familial level, we see physical, sexual, emotional, financial, and spiritual abuse against women.

All of these mechanisms of oppression are upheld by deep seated, often undetectable ideas about women as inferior, animalistic, weak, and disposable beings. The most devastating level of sexism is that which culminates as an assault on a womans body and mind by her most intimate partner. Since women are not by nature masochistic, subservient beings, and will reach out for help, the success of this level of sexism is dependent on the complicity of the community. In my experience, many social workers are at the forefront of that complicity, engaged in a betrayal as they claim to be trying to make the world a better place.

Social workers, case managers, and other administrators of public benefits hold an inordinate amount of power over women seeking help. At a worker's whim, a woman can receive or be denied public housing or food stamps. If a worker dislikes a client, which is sure to happen if the client dares to question the validity of the worker's authority or that of the bureaucracy, that client is sure to have to comply to all kinds of mandates before she can receive even the most basic help. She'll be asked to provide extensive and obscure documentation of her identity or her history. She'll have to gather "proof" of her poverty and need to present it as though she is showing her innocence in a crime. Women seeking help are looked upon as cheaters,

A neighbor may have called ACS and when the worker came, there were empty beer bottles about the kitchen. Perhaps the police were called when a woman was beaten by her partner and found the children home from school, the mother unwilling to drop them off with her face black and blue. It is important to note that "the system" views the mother as the one responsible for the children. It is she that must comply to ACS mandates while the children's father often goes about his business unmolested.

Those in prevention stages are also given a list of things they must do or ACS is going to take their children. In the case of something as inane as beer bottles, a parent may have to check into a drug treatment program and complete it, visiting up to 6 hours every day for the next year or two. The parent may or may not be an addict. The important thing is that the ACS worker is not an addictions professional, yet wears the hat of one if he or she pleases. It is my opinion that if the parent wears dread locks, has radical political posters or clothing, is a vegetarian, is a social user of alcohol or marijuana, enjoys punk music or skateboarding, or gets arrested for civil disobedience, she or he can be pretty much certain to have this used against her or him as evidence that he or she may not be a fit parent.

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The ACS worker will put in the report saying something like, "improper lifestyle that could lead to danger in the home." This is especially likely to happen if the parent is a non-white person or doesn't speak a mainstream dialect of English.

I want to make it clear that there is no excuse for child abuse and that we as a community do have an obligation to protect the most vulnerable of oppressed people. The problem is when the aforementioned obligation is used as an excuse to exert all kinds of control over parents. It is a problem when the organization that handles children's well being, like ACS, is in no way accountable to the community from which it snatches out kids.

I currently work in two locations with two different populations. One of these populations is in the South Bronx, at an alcohol and drug treatment program (80% of women in rehab programs are also victims of DV), and the other is in Manhattan, at an immigrant's advocacy non-profit. I previously worked at a DV shelter. Many of my undocumented immigrant clients are participants in what is commonly known as "mail order bride" businesses or victims of an international dating service. All of them were fleeing abhorrent conditions in their homelands. Many of them were in dangerous political situations due to their gender or political points of view.

On a daily basis, I try to practice feminism and anarchism in the social service workplace. In the United States, this is where the casualties and injuries of the white supremacist capitalist patriarchy are gathered under the umbrella of "needy". There's a lot of ways we can assert a radical perspective on a daily basis.

Firstly, basic logic can be used to question decisions made by higher-ups that undermine those who have little power. For example, social workers have meetings called case conferences where they discuss clients and make decisions about clients' lives. One can be an advocate for clients who will be held back due to difference or if they are considered trouble makers.

Clinically, a political understanding of the root causes of oppression can be worked into one's counseling approach, as a form of empowerment. A client who is court mandated into a drug treatment program for cocaine addiction will surely be bombarded by a plethora of behavioral modification

techniques and twelve step meetings. An anti-authoritarian counselor might interview the client about who has had authority over her throughout her life and how they have used it. It is important for survivors of domestic violence and child abuse to truly understand patriarchy.

It's important for people struggling with poverty to understand capitalism. Only in this way will the client be able to get to the root of the problem and begin to heal consciously. Women in my DV support groups are always excited to learn about radical black women in history, to learn their stories. There is no reason the therapeutic environment

Take Back the Night or Walk-A-Thon Against Hunger. Often these events are closely monitored. The NYC Domestic Violence March in October "requires" marchers to register with the NYPD. The organizers of these marches have lots of money and do pull in a lot of people. I think we should flyer at those events so participants, often survivors of domestic violence and rape who are looking for some place to be active, know there is another level of resistance possible.

Finally, clients and benefits recipients can be given the tools necessary to organize. I have had the pleasure of traveling with my clients to a day of resistance, part of which was a protest outside of a building where the World Economic Forum was meeting to discuss what to do with us activists post Feb. 2, 2002. Currently, nearly all of my clients are preparing to organize a massive demonstration with Community Voices Heard to oppose cutting welfare and increasing slave-type welfare work programs.

I had a boss once who said that social workers didn't really want society to get well. That would leave them all out of jobs. There is a particular energy that drives a person to do service work. Much of the time the person doesn't want to earn a living in corporations, can see that the world is messed up, and has a desire to somehow fix it in some small way.

There is real potential in those convictions. I can't imagine the power inherent in social workers if they united against the current system of brutality. It would be truly amazing.

RESOURCES

National Domestic Violence Hotline 1-800-799-7233

Coalition for Battered Women
16 W 32nd St. New York, NY
212-273-9617

Coalition Against Domestic Violence

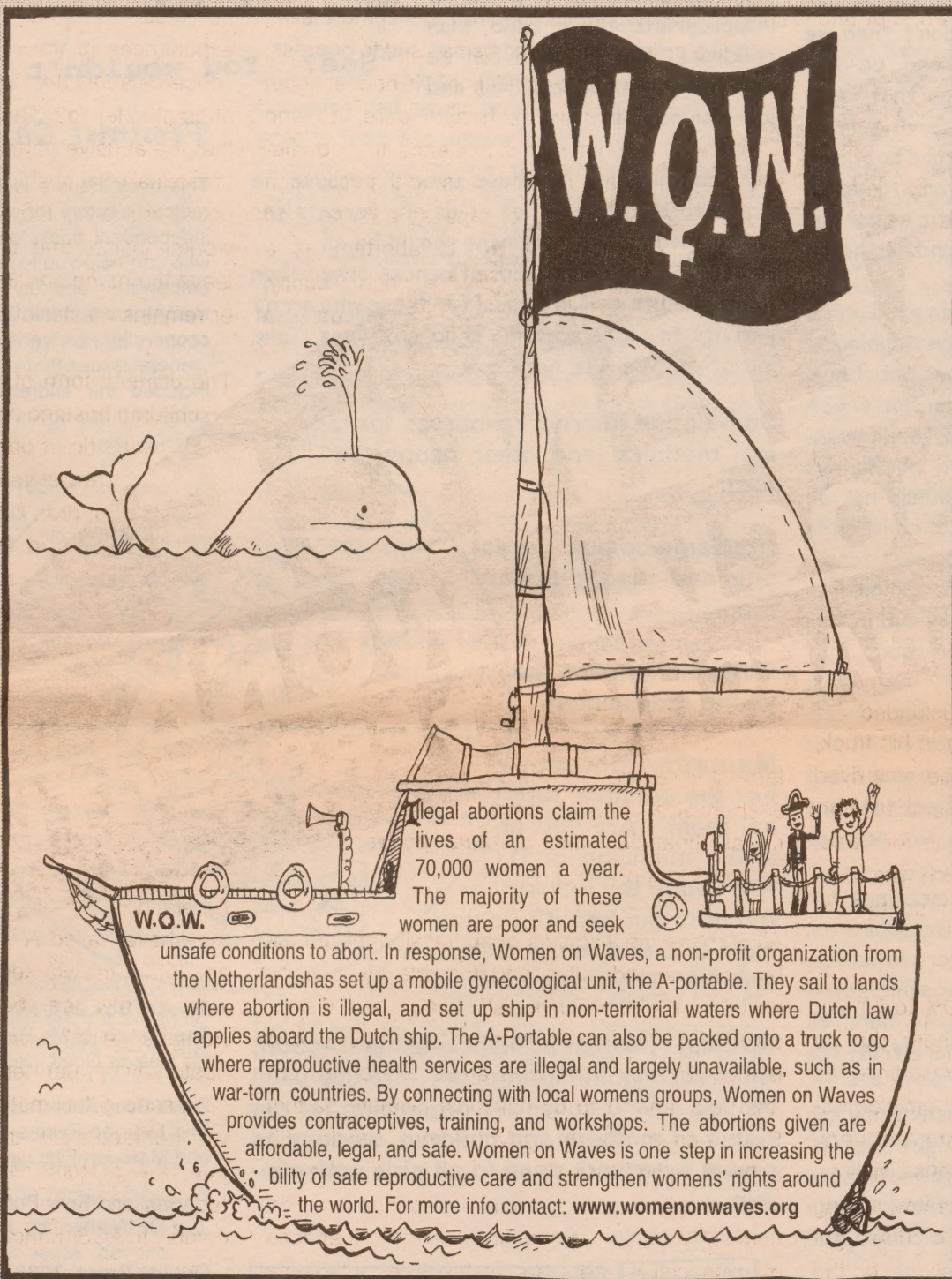
79 Central Avenue Albany, NY 12206
1-800-942-6906 518-432-4864

Rape Crisis Intervention Program
5 E 98th St. New York, NY
212-241-2140

24-hour Domestic Violence Hotline:
1-800- 621-HOPE (4673)

Sexual Assault and Violence Project
40 E 98th St. # 1E New York, NY
212-423-2143

Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers 916-451-0621
www.womenshealthspecialists.org



should be scourged of empowering educational information.

Support groups can be handed over to their members who are usually capable of making their own rules and lists of topics. The conversation will be more energetic and useful. The counselor or group leader can guarantee that the group runs smoothly by serving as a facilitator, using the same skills she would use to facilitate a spokes counsel or coalition meeting.

This also goes for the running of a DV shelter. Gather the shelter residents and tell them to write out the program. Let them say what they need and want. Liberal non-profits often have rallies like

Feminist Momma

By Sasha Luci

As a young teenager, I was an feminist, environmentalist, leftist, ist, ist, an ist for everything. By senior year I was pregnant. At this time I really learned about being alone and my rights as woman. Did I ever really have any? Why was I handed the address to an abortion clinic instead of a prescription for prenatal vitamins? I chose. I chose. I wanted this child.

The stigmatism of being a teen mom is far greater than anyone who isn't one can imagine. We are pushed at every turn to abort. If we choose not to, we are almost expected to put the child up for adoption. If we don't then we are inevitably expected to fail and be the world's worst parents. Every person that looks your way feels that it is his or her civil duty to tell you how bad you fucked up. We are not given standards to live up to; we are given standards to live down to. We become a statistic as part of an epidemic. I am not an epidemic, and neither is my son.

Now I'm glared at in contempt; I am a whore and a drain on society. I won't apologize for being a sexual being or for not being ashamed for raising a prodigy. I am not a welfare mom, but I am not against it. I think mothers should be paid what they are worth, not worth what they're paid. Women should not be forced into the workplace and their children in day care for lack of a husband or a trust fund.

For all of time, women bore children in their teen years. Only in this century and in this country has it become so taboo. So taboo that many men don't take responsibility. So taboo that our extended families are no longer there. So taboo that many women are shamed on the welfare line. I am not apologetic. I am glad I had my son. I am one of many teen mothers that are here and we are awesome parents. We are not ashamed.

My son comes with me to meetings for peace and globalization issues, discussions on alternative living, and rallies for every injustice. We are almost always met with the same patriarchal nonsense I've been trying so hard to deprogram myself from. I expect more from the activist community.

At some point I stopped 'hushing' my son and started telling other people to "get over it" because he's a kid and I'm going to make sure that he can act like one. Why at all these events planned for progress is there such a closed wall

to children? They need to learn. They need to be welcome to participate. After all, they are whom we fight for- they are the future. We all need to grow a bit. We need to recognize and leave behind the flaws we see in this society while we work to change it.

Here are some simple tips on being less patriarchal:

- 1- Be inclusive of everyone when planning an event, especially children.
- 2- If you feel a certain event might be dangerous or somehow inappropriate for a child, plan childcare. The children can be doing progressive activities and learning as well.

My son joins me at these events because he needs to be there. A lot of us are parents for justice. A healthy movement should be all inclusive. Children need influences other than their parents so it is crucial for those who aren't parents to take part in children's lives. Take initiative. We ARE here now.

Some good internet resources for radical mothers (and other people too):

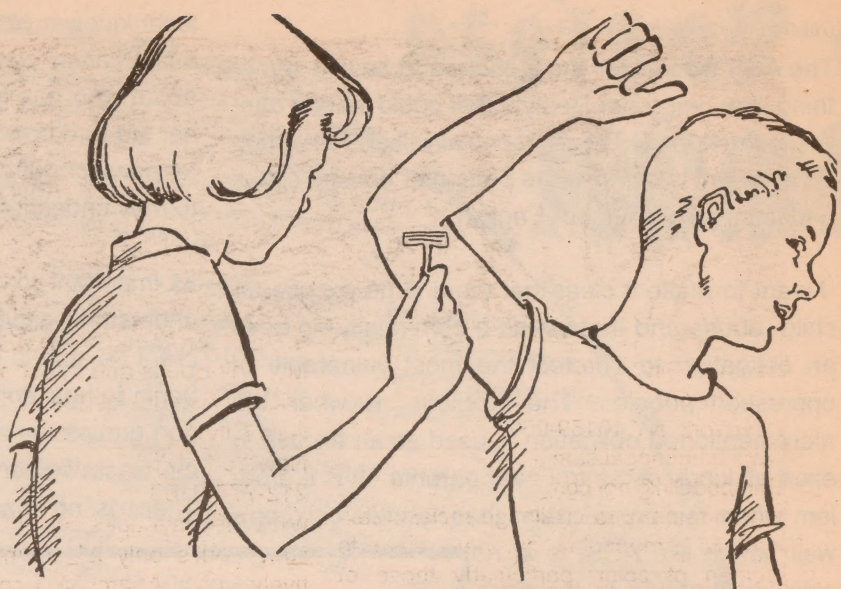
HipMama.com-A great site and magazine for moms.

GirlMom.com-For the young radical mom

Mamaphonic.com-For the creative, radical mom. Are you an artist, musician or DJ? Are you in the industry or trying to get into it? Do you have a zine & need writers or artwork? Then check out this site.

M.A.M.A. (Mother'sAlliance4MilitantAction) Anima212@mindspring.com 718-956-0104 We are a NYC collective organizing for the rights of mothers and children, working to create a network open to all girls and wimin.

All of the art on this page is from: **Girls will be boys will be girls** coloring book. This book is full of appropriated images that are put in a new context to provide a positive look at gender roles. People of all ages who have been taught to suppress their emotions, wear specific clothing or work a particular occupation would really enjoy this creative book. This coloring book is an important tool that can be used to reinforce positive gender roles in every community. To get a copy \$6 each, or to distribute this book in your infoshop or bookstore, contact: Jt Bunnell and/or Irit Reinheimer PO Box 1213 New Paltz, NY 12561 email: colormegenderless@facehugger.com



"See? You wouldn't like it either."

Feminist Childrens' Books

This book list is a jumping off point for those wanting radical literature for children. Any feminist or independent bookstore around should have someone who can help you locate more titles that are empowering and fun to read. All of the books listed are really good and talk about female empowerment, cooperation, conservation, alternative families and general issues that many kids children relate to. I have included the addresses of the publishers because some of these books may be hard to find. Happy reading!

Carolina Wren Press, Box 277, Carrboro, NC 27510:

Lots of Mommies, by Jane Severance c. 1989

Jesse's Dream Skirt, by Bruce Mack c. 1979

Grownups Cry Too/ Los Adultos Tambien Lloran, by Nancy Hazen c. 1972, 2nd ed 1978

The Feminist Press, SUNY College, Old Westbury, Box 334, Westbury NY 11568:

ABC Workbook, by Jean Mangi c. 1975

A Train for Jane, by Norma Klein c. 1974

The Woman's Press: Trafalgar Square Books, Box 257, North Pomfret, VT 05053

The Travels of Ms Beaver(1973), *Ms Beaver Goes West* (1983), by Rosemary Allen

Press Gang Publishers, 603 Powell St, Vancouver, BC

The Day the Fairies Went On Strike, by Linda Briskin and Maureen FitzGerald c. 1981

Harper and Row Publishers, NY

Just Us Women, by Jeanette Caines c. 1982

Quality Press, 3962 S. Mariposa, Denver, CO. 80110

The ABC's of What a Girl Can Be, by Vivian Shelden Epstein c. 1980

Methuen, Inc. 29 West 35th St, NYC 10001

Don't Bet on the Prince: Contemporary Feminist Fairy tales in North America and England, by Jack Zipes This is a book with stories and essays about how fairy tales were manipulated to teach girls and women to conform to male society.



Sometimes the princess is saved by the girl next door.





RESOURCES



Bamboo Girl
PO Box 507,
New York, NY 10159-0507
www.bamboogirl.com
BambooGirl@aol.com

Our mission is to challenge racism, sexism, & homophobia as they relate to women of color, particularly those of Filipina, Asian Pacific Islander (API) & mixed Asian heritage

Bluestockings Women's Bookstore
178 Allen St.
New York, NY 10002
212-777-6028
Fax: 212-777-6042
info@bluestockings.com
www.bluestockings.com

We're a collectively-run independent women's bookstore and cafe, working through words, art and activism. We provide events, workshops, and a meeting place. 2- 9pm Wed-Sun
Languages: English, Spanish

Brooklyn Women's Martial Arts Center for Anti Violence Education
421 5th Ave
Brooklyn, NY
718-788-1775

We have classes for adults in karate, tai chi, self defense. Classes are also available to children and teens. All classes are for women only, and are priced at a sliding scale based on your income.

Callen-Lorde Community Health Center
356 W.18th Street
New York, NY
212-271-7200
Very affordable, friendly healthcare center.

Dumba Queer Collective
57 Jay Street
Brooklyn, NY
718-858-4886

Queer collective space available to host performances and art shows of all kinds at low cost to the artist. Free meeting space provided for various groups, call for more info and events.

Dyke TV
PO Box 170-163
Brooklyn, NY 11217
718-230-4770
staff@dyketv.org
www.dyketv.org

Dyke TV is a half-hour monthly TV program produced by lesbians, for lesbians. We mix news, political commentary, the arts, health, sports, and more.

House of Anjea /
Sistahs in Alliance for Truth and Harmony
208 W.13th Street,
New York, NY 10011
(212) 479-7886
Exclusively for bisexual women of color. Meets on the last Sunday of the month. Lesbian Herstory Archives

LHEF Inc.
PO Box 1258,
New York, NY 10116
718-768-DYKE
www.lesbianherstoryarchives.org
Contact to us to use or view the extensive archive collection.

Mayday Books and Infoshop
155 1st Ave.(inside the Theatre For the New City)
New York, NY
212-777-8169
www.maydaybooks.net
New York's only all volunteer, collectively run Anarchist bookstore. We have an extensive women's section. Open daily 12-9, Sun 12-6.

Harassment Stops Here

The Street Harassment Project is founded on the belief that street harassment, rape, and assault are connected issues which stem from attitudes of dehumanizing women. We are feminists and see the struggle against such attitudes and actions as a part of the larger struggle for women to be equal and have full human rights in every area of life. We believe harassment of women is not "natural" and is not "no big deal". Nor do we believe that it is fun and flattering. We should feel free to celebrate our bodies and sexuality without fear that we will be harassed or assaulted. Ignoring harassment *does not work*. We believe that the way to deal with harassment is to send out strong messages that we don't welcome or want this behavior. It is unacceptable and clearly wrong. We are not against men, we are against people whose behavior violates us. The Street Harassment Project began in 1999 as an outgrowth of the Feminist Living Lab's monthly Consciousness Raising group.

New York Asian Women's Center
(212) 732-5230
contact@nyawc.org
24 Hour Hotline: 1-888-888-7702
Services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault survivors include shelter, counseling and crisis intervention, advocacy & accompaniment, court assistance, support groups & activities, and information referrals. We also offer services for children who are abused, or have witnessed violence. Languages: Chinese and Korean. Other Asian languages can be arranged.

Riot Grrrl New York
ABC No Rio
156 Rivington St.
New York, NY 10009
212-254-3697
www.rgny.8m.com
Riot Grrrl New York is a youth-oriented, DIY (do-it-yourself) feminist group. We are open to any and all women, grrrls, and female-identified transpeople in the NYC area--or anywhere. We meet Sat 1-3 pm.

Shades of Lavender Brooklyn LBT
260 Broadway, 4th Floor
Brooklyn, NY 11211
718-388-0028 x110
Multicultural Center for Bi and Lesbian women.

South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA)
PO Box 1491
Old Chelsea Station,
New York, NY 10113
(212) 358-5132
salganyc@hotmail.com

We are a group for LGBT people who trace their descent from countries such as Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Burma, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Tibet as well as people of South Asian descent from countries such as Guyana, Trinidad, and Kenya.

We are a grassroots, non-hierarchical group committed to democratic input from all of our members. Our group is all female, but we are willing to work in coalition with pro-feminist male supporters. We are inclusive of people of all ages, sexual orientation, and ethnic backgrounds. We consist of several working groups including a Graphics Committee, a Street Theater Committee, a Workshop Committee, and Street Patrol. We use these working groups along with rallies, actions, and internet communication to carry out our goals. One of our main suggestion to women everywhere is that we support each other on the street by creating a culture of solidarity among women. We wish to experiment with our theories and actions, and pass along results to other women. We hope to be a "seed project"- one that groups of women in other locations may want to model themselves after so that street harassment projects can start up in many other cities and countries.
www.streetharassmentproject.org

The South Asian Women's Creative Collective (SAWCC)
C/o AAWW 16 East 32 Street, Suite 10A
New York, NY 10001
(212) 494-0061
sawcc@juno.com
www.sawcc.org
The SAWCC is an organization dedicated to the advancement, visibility and development of emerging and established South Asian women artists.

Swing the Pussy Collective
LGBT Community Services Centre
208 13th St.
New York, NY
laramuse@earthlink.net
STP is a free newsletter by & for multicultural & multigenerational NY Lesbians, Women Who Do Women, etc.

Women's One World Café & Theater
59-61 E.4th Street
212-777-4280
We are a café and theater space available for women performers. We often host different events. Call for schedule.

NATIONAL

National Latina Health Organization
PO Box 7567
Oakland, CA 94601
510-534-1362

Planned Parenthood
1-800-230-PLAN

Sister Connect National Warmline
1-800-747-1108

Women Alive National Hotline (Spanish operators available):
1-800-554-4876
Outside the U.S.: 323-965-1564

WEBSITES

www.aidv-usa.com
American Institute on Domestic Violence

www.chicanas.com
Feminist Chicana website. Well written and inspiring. Some links are outdated.

www.mujerfla.org
Mujeres Unidas en Justicia, Educación y Reforma, Inc. (M.U.J.E.R., Inc.) is a private, non-profit organization established by and for Latina women through grassroots efforts.

www.writefullyours.com
This website provides information, products and services to a community of African-American women.

www.feminist.org
Feminist website with good information and resources.

www.femcrimlaw.com
This website is a women's criminal justice resource site. Lists resources for prisoners and those dealing with the legal system.

www.mutualsupportnetwork.org
A far-reaching network for anti-authoritarian groups and people trying to create positive radical change in order to assist each other and coordinate events, actions and support. Email to get your own resources posted.

www.anarcho-nyc.net
New York City's very own anarchist page. Find out about all sorts of anarchist projects, collectives and media.

www.infoshop.org
Your online anarchist community.

www.crimethinc.net
Anarchist projects world wide.

Are you a woman or tranny who loves their bike??
If so you should contribute to
A zine for those sick of male
centric bicycle culture
Deadline Oct. 1 2002

Critical Mass

if you want to
lay it out it
will be
5.5"x8.5"

send stories, artwork,
d.i.y bike mechanic info.
etc.

Send to Andalusia
3807 Melwood Ave
Pittsburgh, PA
15213

email:
atalayalla@
hotmail.com

THE END OF ARROGANCE

DECENTRALIZATION AND ANARCHIST ORGANIZING

For too long, anarchist projects have been mismanaged by arrogant fantasies of mass. We have unconsciously adopted the Statist, Capitalist and Authoritarian belief that "bigger equals better" and that we must tailor our actions and group towards this end. Despite our intuitive understandings that large organizations rarely accomplish more than small, tight groups working together, the desire for mass remains strong. We must re-examine how we organize projects in order to awake from the nightmare of over-structure that inevitably leads to bureaucracy, centralization and ineffective anarchist work. This article suggests a few ideas on how anarchists can reject the trap of mass and reinvent ourselves, our groups and our work: from local community activities to large revolutionary mobilizations. The rejection of mass organizations as the be-all, end-all of organizing is vital for the creation and rediscovery of possibilities for empowerment and effective anarchist work.

The Tyranny of Structure

Most mass structures are a result of habit, inertia and the lack of creative critique. Desire for mass is accepted as common sense in the same way it is 'common sense' that groups must have leaders, or that they must make decisions by voting. Even anarchists have been tricked into accepting the necessity of super structures and large organizations for the sake of efficiency, mass, or unity. These super structures have become a badge of legitimacy and they are often the only conduits by which outsiders, whether the media, the police or other leftists, can understand us. The result is an alphabet soup of mega-groups which largely exist to propagate themselves and, sadly, do little else. Unfortunately, we haven't just been tricked into accepting superstructures as the overriding venue of our work: many of us have gone along willingly, because the promise of mass is a seductive one.

Large coalitions and super-structures have become the coin of the realm not only for leftist groups in general but also for anarchist enterprises. They appeal to activists' arrogant fantasies of mass: the authoritarian impulse to be leading (or at least be part of) a large group of people that reinforce and legitimize our deeply held ideologies and beliefs. Even our best intentions and wildest dreams are often crowded out by visions of the black clad mob storming the Bastille or the IMF headquarters.

The price of the arrogant dream of mass is appallingly high and the promised returns never come. Super-structures, which include federations, centralized networks and mass organizations, demand energy and resources to survive. They are not perpetual motion machines which produce more energy than what is poured into them. In a community of limited resources and energy like ours, a super-structure can consume most of these available resources and energies, rendering the group ineffective. Mainstream non-profits have recently illustrated this tendency. Large organizations like the Salvation Army commonly spend 2/3 of their monies (and even larger amounts of its labor) on simply maintaining its existence: officers, outreach, meetings and public appearance. At best, only 1/3 of their output actually goes to their stated goals. The same trend is replicated in our political organizations.

We all know that most large coalitions and super-structures have exceedingly long meetings. Here's a valuable exercise: The next time you find yourself bored by an overlong meeting, count the number of people in attendance. Then multiply that number by how long the meeting lasts: this will give you the number of person-hours devoted to keeping the organization alive. Factor in travel time, outreach time and the propaganda involved in promoting the meeting and that will give you a rough estimate of the amount of activist hours consumed by greedy maw of the super-structure. After that nightmarish vision, stop and visualize how much actual work could be accomplished if this immense amount of time and energy were actually spent on the project at hand instead of what is so innocently referred to as 'organizing'.

Affinity or Bust

Not only are super-structures wasteful and inefficient, but they also require that we mortgage our ideals and affinities. By definition, coalitions seek to create and enforce agendas. These are not merely agendas for a particular meeting but larger priorities for what type of work is important. Within non-anarchist groups, this prioritization often leads to an organizational hierarchy to ensure that all members of the group promote the overall agenda.

A common example is the role of the media person or 'spokesman' (and it is almost always a man) whose comments are accepted as the opinion for dozens, hundreds or sometimes thousands of people. In groups without a party line or platform, we certainly shouldn't accept any other person speaking for us—as individuals, affinity groups or collectives. While the delusions of media stars and spokespeople are merely annoying, superstructures can lead to scenarios with much graver consequences. In mass mobilizations or actions, the tactics of an entire coalition are often decided by a handful of people. Many of the disasters of particular recent mobilizations can be squarely blamed on the centralization of information and tactical decisions on a tiny cadre of individuals within the larger coalition/organization (which might include dozens of collectives and affinity groups). For anarchists, such a concentration of influence and power in the hands of a few is simply unacceptable.

It has long been a guiding principle of anarchist philosophy that people should engage in activities based on their affinities and that our work should be meaningful, productive and enjoyable. This is the hidden benefit of voluntary association. It is arrogant to believe that members in a large structure, which again can number in the hundreds or thousands of people, should all have identical affinities and ideals. It is arrogant to believe that through discussion and debate, any one group should convince all the others that their particular agenda will be meaningful, productive and enjoyable for all. Due to this nearly impossible situation, organizations rely on coercion to get their agendas accepted by their membership. The coercion is not necessarily physical (like the State) or based on deprivation (like Capitalism) but based on some sense of loyalty or solidarity or unity. This type of coercion is the stock and trade of the vanguard.

Organizations spend a significant amount of their time at meetings trying to convince you that your affinities are disloyal to the greater organization and that your desires and interests obstruct or remove you from solidarity with some group or another. When these appeals fail, the organization will label your differences as obstructionist or breaking 'unity'—the hobgoblin of efficiency. Unity is an arrogant ideal which is too often used against groups who refuse to cede their autonomy to a larger super-structure.

Many anarchists whose primary work is done in large organizations often never develop their own affinities or skills and instead, do work based on the needs of super-structures. Without affinity groups or collective work of their own, activists become tied to the mass abstract political goals of the organization, which leads to even greater inefficiency and the ever present "burn-out" that is so epidemic in large coalitions and super-structures.

Liberty, Trust and True Solidarity

"All Liberty is based on Mutual Trust" —Sam Adams

If we seek a truly liberated society in which to flourish, we must also create a trusting society. Cops, armies, laws, governments, religious specialists and all other hierarchies are essentially based on mistrust. Super-structures and coalitions mimic this basic distrust that is so rampant and detrimental in the wider society. In the grand tradition of the Left, large organizations today feel that due to their size or mission, they have a right to micromanage the decisions and actions of all its members. For many activists, this feeling of being something larger that themselves fosters an allegiance to the organization above all. These are the same principles that foster nationalism and patriotism. Instead of working through and building initiatives and groups that we ourselves have created and are based in our own communities, we work for a larger organization with diluted goals, hoping to convince others to join us. This is the trap of the Party, the three letter acronym group and the large coalition.

In large groups, power is centralized, controlled by officers (or certain working groups) and divvied out, as it would be done by any bureaucratic organization. In fact a great deal of its energies are devoted to guarding this power from others in the coalition. In groups which attempt to attract anarchists (such as anti-globalization coalitions) this centralization of power is transferred to certain high profile working groups such as 'media' or 'tactical'. Regardless of how it appears on the outside, superstructures foster a climate in which tiny minorities have disproportionate influence over others in the organization.

As anarchists, we should reject all notions of centralized power and power hoarding. We should be critical of anything that demands the realignment of our affinities and passions for the good of an organization or abstract principle. We should guard our autonomy with the same ferocity with which the super-structure wishes to strip us of it.

Mutual aid has long been the guiding principle by which anarchists work together. The paradox of mutual aid is that we can only protect our own autonomy by trusting others to be autonomous. Super-structures do the opposite and seek to limit autonomy and work based on affinity in exchange for playing on our arrogant fantasies and the doling out power. Decentralization is the basis of not only autonomy (which is the hallmark of liberty), but also of trust. To have genuine freedom, we have to allow others to engage in their work based on their desires and skills while we do the same. We can hold no power from them or try to coerce them into accepting our agenda. The successes that we have in the streets and in our local communities almost always come from groups working together: not because they are coerced and feel duty-bound, but out of genuine mutual aid and solidarity.

We should continue to encourage others to do their work in coordination with ours. In our anarchist work, we should come together as equals: deciding for ourselves with whom we wish to form affinity groups or collectives. In accordance with that principle, each affinity group would be able to work individually with other groups. These alliances might last for weeks or for years, for a single action or for a sustained campaign, with two groups or two hundred. Our downfall is when the larger organization becomes our focus, not the work which it was created for. We should work together, but only with equal status and with no outside force, neither the state, god nor some coalition, determining the direction or shape of the work we do. Mutual trust allows us to be generous with mutual aid. Trust promotes relationships where bureaucracies, formal procedures and large meetings promote alienation and atomization. We can afford to be generous with our limited energies and resources while working with others because these relationships are voluntary and based on a principle of equality. No group should sacrifice their affinity, autonomy or passions for the privilege to work with others. Just as we are very careful with whom we would work within affinity group, we should not offer to join in coalition with groups with whom we do not share mutual trust.

We can and should work with other groups and collectives, but only on the basis of autonomy and trust. It is unwise and undesirable to demand that particular group must agree with the decisions of every other group. During demonstrations, this principle is the foundation of the philosophy of "diversity of tactics". It is bizarre that anarchists demand diversity of tactics in the streets but then are coerced by calls for 'unity' in these large coalitions. Can't we do better? Fortunately, we can.

Radical Decentralization: A New Beginning

So let us begin our work not in large coalitions and super structures but in small affinity groups. Within the context of our communities, the radical decentralization of work, projects and responsibility strengthens the ability of anarchist groups to thrive and do work which best suits them. We must reject the default of ineffective, tyrannical super structures as the only means to get work done and must strengthen and support existing affinity groups and collectives. Let us be as critical of the need for large federations, coalitions and other super-structures as we are of the State, religion, bureaucracies and corporations. Our recent successes have defied the belief that we must be part of some giant organization "to get anything done". We should take to heart the thousands of anarchist DIY projects being done around the world outside super structures. Let us come to meetings as equals and work based on our passions and ideals, and then find others with whom we share these ideals. Let us protect our autonomy and continue to fight for liberty, trust and true solidarity.

Anarchy works!
All power to the affinity groups!
Curious George Brigade
August 2002, NYC

